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ABSTRACT

A study compared newspaper coverage of the women's suffrage movement in the 1920s with coverage of efforts to pass the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1970s and early 1980s to see if the similar movements with different outcomes were treated similarly or differently by the press. A content analysis of relevant articles in the "New York Times" and "Indianapolis Star" was conducted for both time periods. The unit of analysis was the paragraph, and for each story the headline, story length, and placement by page were noted. Categories examined included content (reports or opinions), orientation (event or issue), and tone (favorable or unfavorable). The analysis revealed the following results: (1) actual press coverage (story content) was very similar for both amendments in both papers, (2) tone of coverage was more positive for the suffrage amendment, (3) the suffrage amendment earned more coverage, with 60% more stories than the Equal Rights Amendment and some 90% more inches over more coverage days, (4) the suffrage amendment earned more "favorable" stories, with nearly 42% located on the front page, and (5) no difference was noted in coverage in terms of event or issue orientation. (HTH)

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Committee on the Status of Women

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Coverage or Cover-up:

A Comparison of Newspaper Coverage of the 19th Amendment and the Equal Rights Amendment

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
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The 1982 death of the Equal Rights Amendment, 10 years old and three states shy of ratification, was a bitter lesson for its proponents. Press articles at that time centered on what had been learned and what had gone wrong. A variety of possibilities were cited: lack of political savvy, lack of a network, lack of friends or clout in legislative places, lack of money and lack of what Phyllis Schlafly had.

Two things were not mentioned: lack (or not) of role models and lack (or not) of press coverage.

The ERA supporters did not lack for role models. The suffragists of the 19th Amendment had not only paved the way for future women's rights efforts but had provided a startlingly strong parallel.

Press coverage, however, is another story. How did the press handle the often-emotional ERA fight? Was coverage objective or colored by innuendo? How much coverage did the women's issue receive? As little as it seemed to the casual observer? And how did coverage of the ERA compare with coverage of the 19th Amendment from which it traces its roots? Was the coverage for the amendment that was ratified different from the one that was not?

Further, was coverage of ERA as inconsistent as it appeared to be in casual observation at the time of its official demise?

At the June 30, 1982 deadline for ratification, the issue received an extraordinary amount of page one and prime time news coverage -- primarily of the 37-day fast by one group of proponents and the demonstration tactics of another which chained itself to the doorway of the Illi-

nois governor's office during the final days.

The Indianapolis Star ran 12 stories on ERA from June 26 to July 9. The death bed coverage totaled 520 column inches.[1] Three days later, when this same Equal Rights Amendment was reintroduced to Congress, the story was given eight inches of space on page nine despite the fact House of Representatives Speaker Thomas O'Neill was the news principal who, according to the report, told "several hundred" people at an ERA rally "on the Capitol steps" that "I'm sure 80 percent of the people are with us, even though the amendment failed."[2]

Notice of this kind of coverage inconsistency plus a personal interest by the researcher in the women's movement for equal rights is the context from which the research problem originates.

* * *

Investigation of press coverage of the Equal Rights Amendment and its forerunner, the 19th Amendment, hinges on several previously-identified (by other researchers) problems in mass media coverage of social issues: access to the media by splinter or radical groups or groups seen as providing conflict to acceptable social patterns (Morris, 1973; Tuchman, 1978); legitimization of such groups by either the group (to get coverage) or the media (Gitlin, 1980; Morris, 1973); a tendency toward coverage of events, not issues (Tuchman, 1978; Ryan, 1979); a male dominance both in the news columns and the news staff (Tuchman, 1978; Whitlow, 1977; Davis, 1982) and the continual ghettoization of women's news on women's pages which suffer from a continuing lack of social issues coverage (Tuchman, 1978).

Coverage of women's issues touches the edges of all these theoretical/gatekeeping/access/"symbolic annihilation" (Tuchman, 1978) problem areas. New insight into similarities or differences in coverage of the equal rights and suffrage movements will add to this body of knowledge and will do so from the perspective of a comparative study of like issues across time.

* * *

The Questions

If the Equal Rights Amendment of 1972-1982 has its roots in the suffrage movement of 1919-1920, it appears natural to compare the two in terms of press coverage to see if similar movements that had different outcomes were treated similarly or differently in the press. Historical backgrounding of the two amendments, their sponsoring groups and the general atmosphere of the time periods in which they existed indicate significant parallels.

The time periods in particular offer striking similarities. Both the 1920s and the 1970s were post-war periods (World War 1 - the Vietnam Conflict), both experienced reform movements (Roosevelt's - Johnson's), both had a socio-political scandal (Harding administration - Watergate), both were periods where women went to work outside the home in great numbers (war-related for the 19th- economy-related for the 70s), both time segments experienced a great change in lifestyle (from rural to urban for the 1920s - from urban to anti-urban for the 1970s), both were times of intensified reporting (a surge of political and indepth reporting for the 1920s, most closely related to war reports,

the text of the Treaty of Versailles and the like - the interpretative reporting of Woodward and Bernstein and the Pentagon Papers) and both were presidential election years.

As for the amendments, the 19th took 41 years from first introduction to passage by Congress; the ERA took 49 years. The alternative method to constitutional amendment was the same for both -- state-by-state statutes. In both cases, some states already had clauses for the amendment's main idea. And, both amendments experienced the same arguments against them: protective laws on employment, work, support, and finances would be endangered; abortion and divorce rates would increase; the family structure would be crippled; femininity would be lessened, and, states' rights would be weakened.

* * *

The research questions for a comparison of the two include:

1. Were two similar women's rights amendments treated similarly or differently in press coverage of the events and issues surrounding their ratification or ratification attempts?

2. Was the tone of coverage the same or was it more positive and supportive for the "successful" amendment?

3. Did amounts of coverage during like situations (state ratification, Congressional passage) vary between the two?

4. Did the "play" or positioning of stories differ significantly? Were ERA stories "ghettoized" on the women's pages, out of sight of male legislators, while suffrage coverage was given positioning generally accorded to genuine or hard news?

5. Was there a difference in coverage of the two in terms of being event-oriented or issue-

oriented?

* * *

Related Studies

No related studies were found that answered any of the research questions, but several relate to areas of concern posed by the research questions. No similar comparative ERA-suffrage studies were found. Three studies did address the question of ERA coverage. Butler and Paisley (1978) in one study and Farley (1978) in another analyzed the summer 1976 coverage of the ERA by more than 30 women's magazines. Butler and Paisley found 73 percent favoring ERA. Farley determined that fashion and romance magazines scored the highest on advocacy ratings and that magazines with high coverage scores had high average circulations and middle class audiences.

In the third study, Jerrard (1980) analyzed 61 editorials from southern newspapers and found the majority to be conservative and using the rhetoric of conservative resistance.

Suffrage was examined in a study of access to the Portland Oregonian. Kessler found that the paper did not mirror the intensity or activity of the suffrage movement, that the fringe group had little access until it was deemed "legitimate" and that one major event (the national suffrage association convention) opened the channels between the paper and the movement.

The suffrage stance in early Western publications was also examined by Bennion (1979), who concluded that many newspapers were founded as suffrage mouthpieces because the established press refused access

of published derisive articles.

Coverage of women and women's issues is addressed in studies by Whitlow (1977), who found most gatekeepers rejecting stories with women as news principals, by Davis (1982), who concluded "pervasive" bias in use of stories about women as well as story size, placement and portrayal of the central news character, and by Guenin (1975), who found that redesigned newspapers did not tend to use any more social issues stories than did traditional newspapersand in fact had lost some of their traditional women's news space.

Morris (1973) provides two good studies on the problems faced by women's news and the movement. One concludes that newspapers withheld information about the then newly-emerging women's movement as a black-out technique and a form of social control. She cites the fact thatthe movements (in a comparison of English and Los Angeles dailies) were large and active enough to generate coverage but did not.

These findings are elaborated in a study done solely in Los Angeles at two points in time. There, she attempted to determine the effects of the public definition of a social movement upon the movement's progress and press coverage. Her content analysis found that the movement grew and flourished despite a virtual black-out of information by the press. Morris examines coverage within a conflict theory framework in which the press acts as a mechanism of control and also looks at a multi-step solution of ignoring the problem, then giving frivolous coverage and then, if the movement persists, providing publication of its least offensive goals.

Coverage of social issues is also addressed by Funkhouser (1973),

who found that 1960s coverage did not necessarily bear any relationship to the size or activity of the issue or group. Ryan and Owen (1976) found a lack of coverage in their study of social issues -- only an 8.8 percent showing of the total newshole in eight metropolitan dailies. Racism-sexism came in sixth, with 6.4 percent of the original 8.8 percent.

Only one study was found that related coverage of an issue to its legislative outcome. Walter and Baker found the public to be generally uninformed about their state legislatures but also found that the press provided relatively thorough coverage of the legislative session under scrutiny.

Two additional state studies found coverage difficulties or inconsistencies. Wittmayer (1979) followed the South Dakota coverage from 1872 to 1918 and found seven formal campaigns for woman suffrage. She also discovered that only when woman suffrage became part of the state's World War 1 war effort did newspaper editors reverse negative policies, which preceeded amendment passage.

In another study of Oregon press coverage, McKern found antipathy toward four suffrage campaigns, with nearly unanimous support being accorded the final campaign. She also determined that a "still hunt" campaign tactic by the state's dominant suffragist lessened coverage. "Still hunt" meant that public media could not be used in order not to arouse the opposition.

* * *

Previous studies create a jumbled atmosphere from which to examine both the suffrage/ERA coverage and women's issue coverage in general. Some show positive findings, some negative. Most all uncover access

problems. The actual suffrage studies are narrow in scope; the other studies, while offering insights in coverage techniques and problems, don't tend to offer a framework from which to build a new study on this particular comparison. The review of the literature, perhaps more than anything else, points to a need for additional studies or studies across a broader spectrum -- either more state studies that can be compared to one another or studies that compare woman's access to a similar movement or group's access.

The implications of the cited studies to this proposed research appear to be minimal; the best they can offer are concluding comparisons to determine if the coverage afforded the equal rights and 19th amendments fall prey to the same problems and placements.

• • •

The Method

The comparison of coverage of the equal rights and suffrage amendments was drawn from a content analysis of the New York Times and the Indianapolis Star for two legislative timeframes: when each amendment was passed from Congress to the states for ratification, and, when each state (New York and Indiana) ratified each amendment. This provides a dual comparison: coverage of the equal rights versus the suffrage amendment and coverage of a national daily versus a state capital newspaper for each amendment individually and coverage in general.

The New York Times was selected for three reasons: 1) it is a nationally prominent newspaper; 2) it was readily available for this study, and, 3) its women's page was said to have introduced a new type

of journalism in the 1960s, characterized as being somewhat feminist-oriented and produced by women sympathetic to the women's movement (Tuchman, 1978). It was thought the latter reason might offer an interesting balance to earlier-cited problems of social issues coverage.

The Indianapolis Star was selected because it is a newspaper from a state capital; it doubles as a statewide daily, and, copies from both time periods were readily available for the study.

Selection of the editions of each newspaper was made according to the dates of legislative activity. Using dates of Congressional or state passage, the issues for that day, three days prior and three days afterwards were then analyzed. The pre- and post-issue dates were used to determine build-up or backlash. Stories on generic women's topics such as feminism, women's liberation or women's politics that did not specifically mention the amendment in question were not included. Appropriate stories had to center on suffrage, suffragists, women's vote, the 19th amendment, the equal rights amendment or ERA. News stories, features, editorials and letters to the editor were included along with regular hard news coverage.

The analysis used a coding sheet per story. (See Appendix 1.) The unit of analysis was the paragraph, which was quicker than sentence analysis but provided a more thorough analysis than afforded by singularly coding the entire story.

For each story, the headline, story length, and placement by page were noted. Size was determined in inches either by direct measurement or by a mathematical equivalency that converted microfilm image size to regular page size.

Photo usage was also noted including size and content.

Categories examined included:

1. Content: reports, inferences, judgments or opinions. Each was also noted for attribution on nonattribution.

Operational definitions for this category include: a report is what someone has heard, seen or felt and can be verified; an inference is a statement about the unknown made on the basis of the known; a judgment is a statement of approval or disapproval of a specific object, occurrence or person; an opinion is a view or appraisal that does not fall into the judgment or inference category (Ryan, 1979, based on Hayakawa).

2. Origin: event- or issue-oriented.

Definitions are: an issue-oriented article must provide an overview of or background for a problem or social issue with the issue being the starting point of the article, not an event; event-oriented articles take as their starting points timely events or definite happenings and must convey important details about those events. (Ryan, 1979)

3. Tone: favorable, unfavorable or neutral.

Favorable was defined as content that caused or created a positive attitude toward the event or issue by conveying positive or favorable information moreso than neutral or negative information, or, which contained mostly proponents' viewpoints. Neutral was seen as tone that equally conveyed both positive and negative sentiments or no such sentiments at all but presented merely verifiable facts. Unfavorable tone was achieved through reporting that emphasized the bad aspects of the amendment, that carried only opponents' views or which

conveyed that the amendment in question might be in legislative jeopardy for opponents' reasons (e.g. legislators won't vote for a silly, unnecessary amendment, not that the body won't be convening).

To keep the study from being merely a sterile mathematical task, qualitative notes were made for each story including its content, format where applicable and surrounding content or placement where applicable. For example, it was noted if stories included past legislative action, pro and/or con quotes and the amendment text.

An analysis of the entries in the New York Times Index for both time periods was also made by counting the number of entries on the previously-mentioned topics.

Actual issue dates examined included:

Passage of the 19th amendment from Congress (June 4, 1919) -- issues from June 1 through June 7, 1919.

New York ratifies the 19th amendment (June 16, 1919) -- issues from June 13 through June 19, 1919.

Indiana ratifies the 19th amendment (January 16, 1920) -- issues from January 13 through January 19, 1920.

Congress passes the Equal Rights Amendment (March 22, 1972) -- issues from March 19 through March 25, 1972.

New York ratifies the Equal Rights Amendment (May 3, 1972) -- issues from April 30 through May 6, 1972.

Indiana ratifies the Equal Rights Amendment (January 18, 1977) -- issues from January 15 through January 21, 1977.

* * *

The Findings

The analysis yielded data and observations that readily and handily answered the research questions.

- Actual press coverage (story content) was very similar for both amendments in both papers.
- Tone of coverage was more positive for the suffrage amendment.
- Amounts of coverage varied drastically between the two amendments.
- Stories tended to be positioned differently (pagewise) for the amendments.
- No difference was noted in coverage in terms of orientation -- event versus issue.

The data show that the 19th amendment earned more coverage with 60% more stories than the equal rights amendment and some 90% more inches over more coverage days. The suffrage amendment earned more "favorable" stories, had nearly 42% of its stories located on Page 1 and earned more editorials. While both amendments earned the same amount of photo coverage (three), those for the suffrage amendment were news photos of a facet of the event (the governor signing the bill, for example) while those for the equal rights amendment were head shots for a feature story or a packed legislative gallery of screaming and raucous women.

In short, coverage for the suffrage amendment was positioned as more important news via Page 1 placement and received much more space than did the equal rights amendment.

* * *

Table 1 shows a comparison of overall coverage via number of days stories appeared, number of stories, total of column inches published and number of accompanying photos. Number of days was based on seven days for each time period -- the event day and three days prior and post -- for a potential of 28 days when stories could appear since four time-frames were examined for each amendment: passage from Congress to the states for suffrage (1) and equal rights (2), and, passage by New York (3) and Indiana (4).

Table 1. Overall statistics for coverage, tone and placement in news stories on the 19th and Equal Rights Amendments in the New York Times and Indianapolis Star

	19th	ERA
COVERAGE		
No. of days (of 28)	20	13
No. of stories	40	25
No. of column inches	752.5	396
No. of photos	3	3
TONE		
Favorable	16	1
Unfavorable	5	8
Neutral	17	16

Table 2. Comparison of page placement for news stories on the 19th and Equal Rights Amendments in the New York Times and Indianapolis Star

PLACEMENT	19th	ERA
Page 1	17	6
Editorial Page	8	1
Other Pages	15	18

As can be seen, the 19th amendment received 40 stories on 20 days, compared to 25 stories in 13 days for ERA. This is a 53% difference in days and a 60% difference in amount of stories. Perhaps the biggest difference and most substantial finding was in column inches -- suffrage stories received 752.5 inches of space compared with 396 for ERA, a 90% difference.

Coverage of the suffrage amendment was markedly more positive in tone (16 favorable stories to 1 for ERA). The 19th amendment also earned three times as many page one placements as did the ERA and eight times as many editorials. "Other" page placement, which might be an inside newspage or the women's page, was equivalent.

Table 3 provides a comparison of the state coverage for the amendments. It shows that coverage in column inches between the 19th and equal rights amendments for each amendment's passage from Congress to the states was similar. The big difference comes in coverage of ratification by the states, when the 19th earned 29 stories worth 586 inches (for both states) while the ERA earned only 17 stories at 226 inches. This last statistic becomes even more lopsided when one considers that of the 17 ERA stories, 10 were letters to the editor and not

staff generated or produced.

Table 3. Comparison of coverage by state in news stories on the 19th and Equal Rights Amendments in the New York Times and Indianapolis Star

	19th	ERA
PASSES CONGRESS		
New York	5/101"	7/145"
Indiana	6/65½"	1/ 25"
TOTAL	11/166½"	8/170"
STATE RATIFICATION		
New York	7/285"	1/ 6"
Indiana	22/301"	16/220"
TOTAL	29/586"	17/226"
GRAND TOTAL	40/752½"	25/396"

This table also shows that for ERA coverage, the New York Times appears to favor coverage of a national scope (seven stories for 145 inches) over the more narrow state coverage (one story at six inches), while Indianapolis is exactly the reverse (only one national story but six (or 16, including LTEs) state coverage at 166/220 inches). Indianapolis, being a home state paper, also published more stories on state ratification of the suffrage amendment (22 to the Times' 7), but difference in inches was minimal.

Almost every category contained one lengthy feature story that could be considered to upend the overall inchage tally.

Table 4 shows the state statistics in a slightly different format

to demonstrate coverage difference between a national daily and a state capital paper. While the overall number of stories between the two states was quite different (20 for New York and 35 for Indiana), the total in inches was quite similar.

Table 4. Coverage differences between a national daily and a state capital daily for stories on the 19th and Equal Rights Amendments published in the New York Times and Indianapolis Star

	New York		Indiana	
19th - Congress	5	101"	6	65½"
19th - State	7	285"	22	301"
	12	386"	28	366½"
ERA - Congress	7	145"	1	25"
ERA - State	1	6"	6	166"
	8	151"	7	191"
TOTAL	20	537"	35	557"

Of the suffrage amendment's 40 stories, all were event-oriented. The ERA's 15 included four issue-oriented pieces.

The breakout of content, shown in Table 5, generally yielded no startling or even illuminating statistics. The results indicate that both amendments scored a similar amount of "reports" and "judgments" but suffrage had twice as many inferences and opinions. These findings do not tend to provide any insights into either differences or similarities of coverage although the amount of inferences could be seen as a factor in the more "favorable" coverage for the suffrage amendment via inferences

of victory or quotation of pro-amendment sources (opinions).

Table 5. Comparison of content of stories on the 19th and Equal Rights Amendments as published in the New York Times and Indianapolis Star

	REPORTS		INFERENCES		JUDGMENTS		OPINIONS	
	19th	ERA	19th	ERA	19th	ERA	19th	ERA
Attributed (263)	104	36	13	2	19	12	55	22
Unattributed (283)	96	149	5	7	--	1	13	12
TOTALS	200	185	18	9	19	13	68	34
Type Total	385		27		32		102	

Of particular interest to the research were the findings from a scan and tabulation of stories indexed by the New York Times. For the periods April to June 1919 and July to September 1920, the Index listed 273 stories directly relating to the suffrage amendment for the six-month period. The three-month periods are how the indices were split during that timeframe and happen to cover exactly the necessary time periods. By the time of the equal rights era, the Index was arranged in a two-year period, January 1972 to December 1973. During this 24-month period, 51 stories on the equal rights amendment were published. This finding -- 273 suffrage stories versus 51 ERA stories in a six-month versus 24-month comparison -- merits attention, even with the possibility of error in indexing by the newspaper.

Qualitatively, the most interesting findings were quite simple: stories for both amendments in both time periods contained much the same factual content presented in very similar styles. While the 1919-20 writing has undertones of being a tad more narrative, both time periods showed a journalism that indeed gave straight news facts, the text of the amendments, a tendency toward legislative history, pro and con sentiments from factional leaders and an indication of what would happen next legislatively or timewise. For the most part, one is left with a feeling of neutrality except in cases where proponents or opponents or news releases were extensively quoted during suffrage coverage.

There was no major difference in type or tone of headlines other than the fact that the 1919-20 method of stacking heads lends a more urgent, excited or immediate feel to the news or event. For example, appearing in the June 5, 1919 issue of the New York Times were these heads for one story:

Suffrage Wins
In Senate: Now
Goes to States

Constitutional Amendment is
Passed, 56 to 25, or Two
More than Two-Thirds.

WOMEN MAY VOTE IN 1920

Leaders Start Fight to Get
Ratification by Three-Fourths
of States in Time.

DEBATE PRECEDES VOTE

Wadsworth Explains His Attitude
in Opposition -- Resolution
Signed with Ceremony.

That type of headline treatment, viewed some 60 years later, tends to carry more news worthiness than the head the Times carried in 1972 when the ERA passed Congress:

Equal Rights Amendment
Is Approved by Congress

This general lack of content difference was found over states, amendments and years.

One noted difference was the publication of 10 letters to the editor of the Indianapolis Star. Seven were negative. All appeared just hours before the Hoosier legislature's ERA vote. It seemed to lend a lopsidedness to the coverage. Granted, editors can't request letters of the opposing view and no fairness doctrine is at work in the print media, but such a negative display seems suspect and skewed.

Another interesting finding was the fact that when the New York legislature passed the Equal Rights Amendment, news of the vote was buried in the fifth paragraph of a story on recent legislative action that was headlined: "Busing Ban Goes to Rockefeller." No other ERA stories preceded or followed the six inches of material included with other legislative topics. In fact, before discovering the buried announcement, it was thought perhaps the Times hadn't covered the event at all. The first scan of that issue had uncovered no headlines for such a vote story. No stories appeared in the pre- or post-time period. It appeared for a short while to be quite a finding! In that same edition, on the women's page, was a story on Groucho Marx headlined "Groucho, at 81, Discusses His Favorite Topic: Women." In that article, he was asked "what do you think of women's rights?" His reply -- "I

like either side of them."

The Times' coverage of the passage of the ERA by Congress showed an equal disregard. On the same day that the bill came before the Senate (which found a story on Page 1 headed "Senators Bar Weakening of Equal Rights Proposal"), almost the entire women's page -- liberatingly and lower-casedly dubbed "family food fashion furnishing" -- was taken up by the story headlined: "In Small Town, USA, Women's Liberation is Either a Joke or a Bore." This 54-inch article, complete with head shots of the women interviewed in rural Hope, Indiana, (population 1,500) included quotes from the women about bra burning, radicals, the headaches potential women leaders would get (which would make them unfit to lead) and the continual thrill of being selected a cheerleader. From a 1984 perspective, the story is a weird cross between being a putdown of the ERA and a putdown of the Hope, Indiana women. In either event, the message is clear: real women are happy; weirdo's are for the ERA.

In all fairness, the Times also ran an interesting story on March 26, a date that didn't qualify for the three pre-/three post- timeframe. Appearing in the Sunday section, and headed "A Vote for Equal Status -- and Equal Burdens," it recounted pro and con arguments, gave some of the history of the amendment and feminism, the legal implications and current legislation that might be changed (differing entry requirements for males and females for schools and military, for example) plus male and female salary differentials both in text and graph form. The story also carried an illustration of a U.S. Army poster depicting a woman ranger.

As for state coverage differences, Indiana utilized banner heads

for both ERA passages. New York, on the other hand, ran its Congressional passage head halfway down the page and only two columns wide. Its state ratification story, as previously mentioned, didn't even earn its own head and was buried within another story.

Indiana's coverage faux pas was equally as glaring as that of the Times' Marx and Hope, Indiana articles. Its solitary story on passage of the ERA by Congess carried the headlines:

Second Banner: Woman's Rights Measure
Clears Congress

Subhead: Amendment Providing Legal
Equality Passes Senate,
Goes to States

Accompanying the neutrally-oriented and factual wire story was a two column by five inch cartoon positioned smack in the middle of the front page under the banner. It showed men gathered around a Senate table, one of whom was "talking." The caption: " -- Furthermore, Since Women Insist on Wearing the Pants Around the House, They Shouldn't Object to Answering a Draft Call." It appeared as though the Star felt compelled to provide local sentiment as a sidebar to its main UPI news story.

On a better note, Indiana provided excellent coverage of its own ratification of the suffrage amendment in January 1920. Then, a special inside page was devoted to a variety of sidebars on the story, including the message of the governor, the person-by-person vote and a line-up of states already ratifying to total five stories on page five, a main story on page one (with both a banner and left and right drop heads leading to double major stories), a four column by six inch photo showing Governor Goodrich signing the resolution and an editorial on the editor-

ial page. Two more editorials followed the next day, one applauding the pioneers in the suffrage cause and another deeming June 17 a memorable day.

The 19th amendment earned banner heads in both papers for both legislative events. Both state papers carried equal amounts of informative features with the Times publishing a particularly impressive and bold Sunday magazine piece authored by Carrie Chapman Catt just prior to the state Congressional ratification vote. "Why Suffrage Fight Took 50 Years" allowed Mrs. Catt, leader of the National American Woman's Suffrage Association, to eloquently talk about silly misconceptions, the monied interests and the paying and crooked politicians that had belabored the amendment. In the article, which was illustrated with two photos, Mrs. Catt indicated that for someone to vote against the amendment might indicate they were in cahoots with something evil or bad.

While the original numbers show a lopsidedness in coverage, that skewedness seems more startling when one considers that the newspaper of 1919-20 was but 20 to 24 pages long as a rule and was half-filled with advertisements. Given that small size and equal-to-today ad/edit ratio, the abundance of suffrage coverage seems even more impressive for both papers.

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A Discussion

It was fully expected that there might be differences in coverage and differences were indeed found. However, since the researcher didn't know what the differences might be, the search and subsequent analysis

was an interesting and challenging endeavor. It was thought that ERA stories might be ghettoized on the women's page, a hypothesis that didn't pan out. A story following Indiana's ratification on the jubilancy of the women was carried in the Lifestyle section, but generally, modern papers ignored the story possibilities and the earlier editions had no woman's page per se. It was also thought that any stories that appeared on the ERA might lean toward a negative tone, a fear that also didn't exist in totality since two-thirds of the ERA articles were neutral.

To be frank, it was rather shocking to find so much coverage of the suffrage amendment. Experienced only in the lack of ERA coverage, it was assumed that newspapers might be less enlightened some 60 years prior. In effect, they were either more enlightened or the movement was seen as more legitimate and acceptable. Both time periods had predominantly male newspaper staffs; both causes had radical factions that chained themselves to White House fences; both amendments had been introduced and bandied about for years. Yet, despite a variety of striking parallels in both the causes and the societal setting, amounts of coverage were vastly different. Ninety percent different.

At this point, it is difficult to determine exactly why the suffrage amendment earned so much coverage and the ERA didn't. Previous studies shed little light. Few relate to this study at all and those that do do so peripherally. The new findings uphold somewhat, for ERA, Morris' and Funkhouser's findings on little coverage of the "movement." The previous suffrage studies, however, don't relate

to this study since coverage over time was not the thrust.

The findings substantiate the concern over lack of issue coverage; however, the timeframe studied -- the days surrounding action -- is understandably more of a time for factual reporting, not issues. The findings also defeat -- for these newspapers at these time periods -- the common cry that newspapers rarely carried the text of the ERA amendment. Nearly all of the stories of any substantial length (thereby barring those merely reporting a state's ratification, for example) carried not only the text of the amendment, but some of the legislative background.

This study and discussion of the findings is not meant to indicate that coverage related to eventual "victory" or "defeat" of the amendments. But given the similarities in setup and differences in outcome, it is a legitimate look. And in the end, one can't help but wonder if the additional coverage didn't make the suffrage amendment more acceptable to the population at large and to the legislators in particular. One would guess that evidence of this degree of coverage for these shortened time periods might be generalized to coverage at large for Indiana and New York -- that the indicators of heavy or weak coverage during these 28 days might be indicative of a similar type and amount of coverage at other times during the year.

One also has to wonder at the fact the Times' put its ERA ratification in the fifth paragraph of another story -- and if that and similar one-shot Indiana coverage isn't an outwardly visible sign that the topic wasn't inwardly important to the newspapers.

FOOTNOTES

[1] The Indianapolis Star: "Ten-year battle for ERA has taught women much," June 26, 1982; "Female legislators have come a long way," June 28, 1982; "Now that the ERA battle has ended," June 29, 1982; "ERA foes confident issue will disappear," June 30, 1982; "ERA foes revel, allies see new fight," July 1, 1982; "Women will continue fight for equality," July 1, 1982; "Women's Equality Day plans movement's future," July 2, 1982; "A Decade of Struggle for Rights," "When women take an interest in power," "Battle for amendment was not wasted effort," "Generations share loss, hope for ERA," "Minority women find survival has precedence over feminism's goals," July 4, 1982; "Women's views cause administration to change priorities, take initiatives," July 6, 1982; "ERA: the defeat of the elite," July 7, 1982; "Shedding ERA tears," July 9, 1982; "Legislators reintroduce ERA as women cheer," July 12, 1982.

[2] "Legislators reintroduce ERA as women cheer." The Indianapolis Star, July 15, 1982, page 9.

APPENDIX 1

SAMPLE CODING SHEET

19th/ERA Amendment Coverage Comparison

Newspaper:_____

Date:_____

Page:_____Section_____Issue Size_____

Story length:_____

Headline_____

Photo ___yes ___no Size/content:_____

_____

Unit of analysis: paragraph

CONTENT

	Reports	Inferences	Judgments	Opinions
Attibuted				
Unattributed				

ORIGIN

Event _____

Issue _____

FAVORABILITY/TONE

Favorable _____

Unfavorable _____

Neutral _____

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